



# Light...

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**COVER PICTURE: The Oasis of Jericho**



# *Current & Bible Affairs Prophecy*



## *War against Terror in the Middle East*

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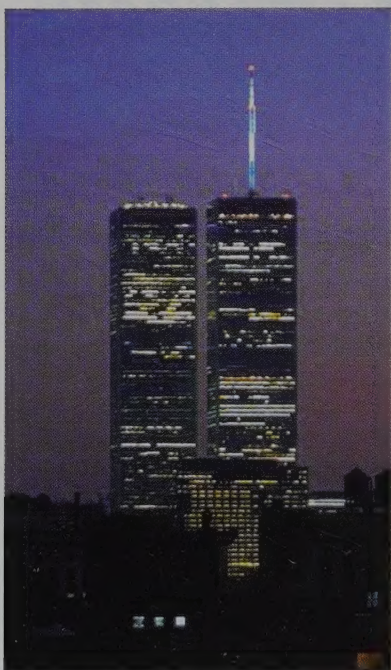
THE TERRORIST ATTACKS in New York on September 11<sup>th</sup> and the global response have brought about a changed situation in world affairs. At the time of writing, (October 2001) old animosities are being swept aside and new friendships forged in the so-called 'War against Terrorism'. There has arisen an almost unprecedented unity of thought amongst the nations of the world. The leaders of Russia and China in particular have voiced support for America as she seeks to bring the perpetrators of the outrage to justice. World attention is once again focused on the Middle East as a centre for conflict and war, as an American led coalition attacks Afghanistan in search of the alleged terrorist leader Osama bin Laden and his al-Qa'eda network.

### A RELIGIOUS ELEMENT

Whilst national leaders have been almost unanimous in their condemnation of the terrorist strikes, the same cannot be said for the common people. In Israel there were early scenes of rejoicing at the attack on America amongst Palestinians on the West Bank. There is unease too amongst the populations of many Islamic states that powerful Western nations should attack an Islamic country. President Bush in an early statement described the need for a 'crusade' against terrorism. The historical and religious connotations of the term immediately caused alarm in the Muslim world. (In the medieval period between AD 1095 and 1291, Europe had sent crusaders against the Moslems to drive them out of the 'Holy Land'.) Moves were quickly made to emphasise the more general meaning of the word 'crusade' but it seems that the actions of the Western alliance were seen in exactly that light in certain quarters.

The problem is compounded by the fact that Osama bin Laden is seen as a hero by many in the Islamic world. He initially denied responsibility for the terrorist attacks but now says that they were justified by the presence of

American troops on 'holy' Saudi Arabian soil and by the support that America gives to Israel in their conflict with the Palestinian people. In stating his cause in this way he immediately strikes a chord with Muslims world-wide.



*New York World Trade Centre*

Tony Blair, when addressing the British Labour Party conference in October, went as far as saying that both Christians, Muslims and Jews 'were all children of Abraham.' Who would have thought that the first conflict of the new millennium would be essentially a religious one? For nearly fifty years there was a cold war stand off between secular Western powers and atheistic Eastern powers. This seems now to have been replaced with a new division, at the popular level at least, between Islamic and non-Islamic peoples. Where will it all end?

### A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

We could at this point shrug our shoulders and say 'who can tell?' We do not take that line. We firmly believe that the Bible prophets give us reason to



look at the events unfolding in the world today in a different way. The 'New World', from which this magazine takes its name, is a Biblical theme. The 'New World' or kingdom of God is spoken of in both Old and New Testaments as being founded on the ruin of the kingdoms of this world that will come to an end with a war in the Middle East. Many of the players on the world's scene today can be identified in biblical prophecies that speak of this time.

There are several prophecies speaking of the end times. (eg Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39; Daniel 11; Joel 3; Zechariah 14; Matthew 24 and Revelation 16) We want to look particularly at the prophet Ezekiel's words in chapter 38, which envisage a time when the nation of Israel will be re-gathered to their land after a period of dispersion among the nations of the world:

'...in the latter years ... the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel...but it is brought forth out of the nations...' [Ezekiel 38.8]

Such a statement certainly fits Israel's current situation as a nation in their Biblical homeland. The Jews were ejected from their land and their State dissolved by the Romans in AD 70. Although there has always been a tiny Jewish population in the land, it was not until the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 that Jews could freely return to the land:

The prophecy as a whole is directed against a particular group of nations who launch an attack on Israel.

'Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the **chief** (Hebrew = Rosh) **prince** of Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him.' [Ezekiel 38.2]

The phrase '**chief prince**' in this quotation from the Authorised Version, has been translated in some modern versions as '**prince of Rosh.**' In 250 BC, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint version), used the word '**Ros.**' This name refers to a nation situated to the North of Israel and is according to some Biblical scholars an ancient name for Russia.

The name Gog is a version of the name Agag, an ancient enemy of Israel. We read that Agag was the leader of the first enemy attack on Israel [Numbers 24.20] and that Israel's future king would overcome him; [Numbers 24.7,8] that God himself had declared war on this nation; [Exodus 17.16] and that God would blot out their remembrance. [Exodus 17.14]

Gog then is a representative biblical figure for one who opposes God's purpose with Israel. Such a person has yet to emerge on the world scene but the nations he is to lead are clearly identifiable from the words of the prophet:

'Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee.' [Ezekiel 38.5,6]

### IDENTITY OF THE NATIONS

Ezekiel's prophecy was given in about 450 BC and this must be remembered when looking at the nations to whom he refers.

### The Nations of Ezekiel 38

- **Magog:** called Scythians by the Greeks who were an 'Aryan people and (in the time of Herodotus, about 400 BC) were distributed over southern Russia'. (H G Wells: The Outline of History, page 127)
- **Rosh:** 'undoubtedly the Russians, who are mentioned by Byzantine writers of the tenth century.' (H W F Gesenius: Hebrew-Chaldee lexicon page 752)
- **Meshech and Tubal:** Nomadic tribes associated with the Scythians who lived in the area between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Their tribal names were eventually preserved in cities later founded by their descendants namely Moscow and Tobolski.
- **Gomer and Togarmah:** These are the ancestors of the Celtic peoples, who settled large tracts of Central and Western Europe, particularly France, known to the Romans as Gaul. (The Celtic name for Wales – Cymru and the name Cumbria are derived from Gomer)
- **Persia, Ethiopia and Libya:** These countries take the least effort to identify. Iran, Sudan and Libya are the modern counterparts. They invade from the North and sweep through the land.



As can be seen from the map, this confederation of nations surrounds the re-gathered nation of Israel. Together they invade from the North and sweep through the land. Another association of nations challenges them as Ezekiel goes on to show:

'Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?' [Ezekiel 38.13]

### MODERN IDENTIFICATION

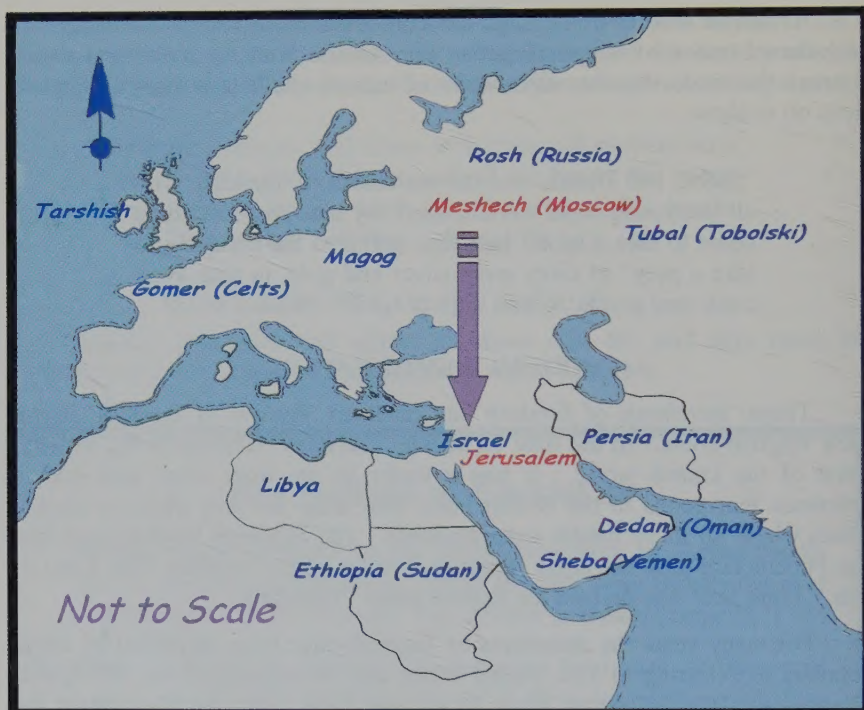
These '*merchants of Tarshish*' are rendered '*Traders of Tarshish*' in the New English Bible. In the time of Ezekiel '*Tarshish*' referred to the extreme West of the known world. It was a trader in tin, iron, silver and lead, a reference that points to the British Isles, this being the only place in ancient times where all these metals were available. The historian Bochart says that the Phoenicians gave the name 'Baratanic' to the place, meaning 'The Land of Tin.' From here was derived the Roman name 'Britannia.'

For many years the merchants of Tarshish have been identified by Bible scholars as referring to The United States and the nations of the old British Commonwealth. (J Thomas, *Elpis Israel* page 433) The identification of the '*Traders of Tarshish*' with this group of countries has been thrown into sharp focus in the present Afghanistan crisis. The United States and Britain along with Canada, Australia and New Zealand all play a part. It is surely significant that it was an attack on the towers of the World Trade Centre that sparked off the present conflict. These nations, if our identification is correct, are again to be together as a group in the events of the latter days, to question the motives of Gog. (See map overleaf)

### THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

We claim no special powers of prophecy or of interpretation but believe the Bible sheds light on the present situation. The effect of terrorist actions in America illustrates just how quickly conditions can change in a volatile Middle East. The present crisis has precipitated a coming together of nations to confront the problems posed.

Ezekiel, who is speaking particularly about the situation of the nation of Israel, envisages a time of disarmament and security for Israel and her neighbours.



Map showing the location of the nations in Ezekiel 38

He writes:

‘...them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.’

[Ezekiel 38.11]

Just what form this will take we cannot be sure. It is probable that peace between Israel and the Palestinians will exist. The present crisis has already had the effect of causing a breakthrough in the peace process in Ireland for example. It is notable that none of Israel’s neighbours, (e.g. Syria, Iraq or the Palestinians) who are at present so antagonistic are mentioned in Ezekiel’s list of Israel’s enemies. Any peace that may exist will eventually be shattered by the overwhelming intervention of Gog and his company from the North. Israel faces annihilation.

It is at this point that God will intervene on behalf of his chosen people.



'And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel.' [Ezekiel 38.18,19]

This is the time of Jesus' return to the earth. His first work among the nations will be to *'save the tents of Judah.'* [Zechariah 12.7] Then follows the setting up of God's kingdom on the earth, the time of blessing envisaged by all the Hebrew prophets. [Acts 3.21]

### PERSONAL APPEAL

The kingdom of God is coming but who will have a part in it? Christian religious sentiment today tends to assume that a future reward is available for all, regardless of belief or way of life. This has not always been so. Previous generations did not view the situation like that. Indeed the earliest Christians believed the words of Jesus. He described a broad way and a narrow way. The broad way, he said, leads to destruction and many people go down that way. On the other hand he said: *'...strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'* [Matthew 7.14]

If we wish to participate in the blessings of the future kingdom of God we must prepare for it now by seeking that 'narrow way' and walking in it. *'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.'* [Mark 16.16]

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## Editorial

AT THIS TIME of the year it is traditional for men and women to express their hopes for the future in wishing one another 'a happy new year.' Sadly for many, this is not the case. The aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 is still being felt around the world and the lives of many people have been shattered by these events.

Where will it all end?

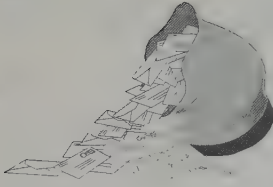
The Bible has the answer to this question and provides assurance for the future. In this issue we commence a new series of articles entitled 'Current Affairs and Bible Prophecy.' Our aim is to direct the attention of our readers to the relevance of Bible prophecy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The first article puts the spotlight on the Middle East that has been headline news for so long. The key to the future lies in that tiny nation of Israel, whose impact on the world's political arena is indeed totally disproportionate to its size.

Israel was the birthplace of Jesus and as we write people all over the world are again making preparations for Christmas. How many will truly celebrate the birth of the one they profess to follow? The teaching and example of Jesus is the basis of Christianity but many who call themselves Christians fail to read and understand the true message of Christianity as found in the Bible.

Some of Christ's words are not easy to understand and this month we start another new series entitled 'What did Jesus mean?' If we are to become his disciples it is essential that we understand what he taught. Jesus said: *'everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.'* [Matthew 7.24 NIV]

If you build on this firm foundation you can have hope for the future in an uncertain world.





## ***From our Mail Bag***

IN THE LAST selection from the mailbag we looked at Jesus' words regarding 'spirit and life'. The question has now been asked:

'When man dies the spirit goes back to God. What then about the spirit of a sinner, does it also go to God? God does not stay together with a sinner. What about his spirit, where does it go at death?

To answer this we need to look at what is meant by the word 'spirit' in this connection. The Hebrew word for 'spirit' used in the Old Testament is *ruach*. This is often translated as wind or breath. (see Psalm 78.39 and Ecclesiastes 3.19) The wise man Solomon wrote concerning death: *'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (ruach) shall return unto God who gave it.'* [Ecclesiastes 12.7] So when the word 'spirit' is applied to man it is referring to his life or his breath. The same word is also applied to the animal creation. [Ecclesiastes 3.19] We read in Genesis concerning the creation of the first man that *'the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.'* [Genesis 2.7]

We further read in Paul's letter to the Romans that **all men have sinned**. *'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.'* [Romans 3.23] In Romans chapter 5, Paul links this with the events in Genesis and the way in which sin first came into the world. [Romans 5.12] The word sin means lawlessness; it is the expression of the human will in defiance of God's law in either thought, word or deed and we are all guilty of that. The Apostle Paul himself confessed that when he would do good evil was present with him. (Read Romans chapter 7 verses 18-25)

When a person dies they stop breathing and that is the end of them. In a sense the spirit or breath goes back to God who gave it in the first place. However this does not support the erroneous teaching concerning the immortality of the 'soul.' In Ecclesiastes we read *'For the living know that*

*they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.' [Ecclesiastes 9.5]*

This poses another question. If death really is final, what hope is there for the future?

We read again in Paul's letter to the Romans:

'... the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' [Romans 6.23]

The true Christian hope is therefore centred in the work of Jesus, who through his death and resurrection opened up the way of salvation from death.

Belief and baptism are the first essentials for salvation. [Mark 16.16] Then, if we have followed the teaching and example of Christ in our lives, when he returns to set up God's kingdom on earth, our hope will be realised. If we have died we will be raised from the dead to judgment or if we are still alive we will be called to the judgment. Then in God's mercy, if we are found worthy we will be granted eternal life in that glorious Kingdom.

The Christadelphians are expecting Christ's return very soon and our sole aim is to preach the truth of God's Word through the pages of the Light Magazine. Sadly many churches have distorted the truth and we urge our readers to think carefully about these things, Bible in hand.

Roy Chessum  
Correspondence Secretary



# What did Jesus mean?

‘Let the dead bury their dead...’

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AT FIRST READING this reply of Jesus seems rather harsh. It was given as a response to someone who said they wished to become a disciple of Jesus. It seems a strange answer anyway, for how **can** the dead bury their dead? It cannot have a literal meaning in this sense, because when we die, of necessity we need someone else to bury us. As is always the case, we need to put this saying of the Master into its context. When did he make this point to his listeners and why? What were the circumstances? Let's explore this incident, because it has some very powerful lessons for would-be disciples of Jesus today.

There are two accounts in the Gospel records – Matthew chapter 8 and Luke chapter 9. The context or perhaps the background to this command of Christ is the calling to be a disciple. The ministry of Jesus was nearing its end, when he would go to Jerusalem and there be crucified. He had called his twelve disciples to him and had sent them out to continue the work of preaching the Gospel that he had initiated more than three years earlier. Jesus now turned his back on Galilee in the north of Israel and as Luke tells us ‘*he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*’ [Luke 9.51] It was on this journey towards the final phase of his ministry that Christ was approached by three would-be disciples.

‘And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, **Let the dead bury their dead:** but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man,

having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' [Luke 9.57-62]

Matthew tells us that the first of these men was in fact, a Scribe. He was one of Israel's elite class and an essential part of the religious hierarchy at the time of Christ. We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of any of these would-be disciples but Jesus was able to discern the genuineness or otherwise of those who approached him. It is written of him that '*he knew what was in man.*' [John 2.25] Discipleship is not an easy matter and Christ had made that very clear:

'... you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another... A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master...' [Matthew 10.22-25 NKJV]

Was this Scribe prepared for such a hard life? Was he ready to leave his comfortable college and lodgings to take up the rough-and-ready work associated with being a disciple of Christ? Clearly Jesus had his doubts, hence his warning that as he the Master, did not have somewhere he could call a home of his own, neither would this Scribe if he chose to follow Christ. We do not know if the man did in fact become a disciple – perhaps he did! If so, it would be with a clear sighted view of life ahead walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

The second of this trio of would-be disciples was not a Scribe. He was already a disciple and for this reason alone, Christ's words to him are all the more to the point. Luke tells us that Jesus simply said '*Follow me*' but Matthew tells us he was already a disciple. So the point that Jesus makes concerns this man's attitude as a disciple.

'Then another of his disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."'

[Matthew 8.21,22 NKJV]

Note that the New King James Version adds the word '*own*' in this passage. This is significant, as we shall see. Was Jesus **really** as harsh to a genuine disciple? If the man's father was indeed dead, it could only just have happened for burial was required before sunset and surely Christ would not have stood in the way of this man? Or was there another reason why the man hesitated to follow Christ? Perhaps there was an inheritance to sort out first,



before following Christ! There is little doubt that Christ was either unconvinced of the man's sincerity or that he wished to drive home the lessons to be associated with becoming a disciple of Christ. What did Christ mean?

When Christ referred to *'the dead'* he was clearly not talking about those who were **physically dead**, but rather those who were **spiritually dead**. We have a very good example of this in John's Gospel record where Christ speaks of his great work in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and the hope of everlasting life in God's kingdom to come. What he says is that those who have the knowledge of the Gospel and have acted upon it, have taken a huge step away from an eternal grave:

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.' [John 5.24-26]

Understanding the true Gospel message is like **spiritually** moving from death to life and the disciple of Christ is surely in that position. It remains for such a man or woman to follow Christ, which is why he told his disciple *'Follow me'*. Whilst duties to dead relatives must be attended to, there is that greater object in life for the true disciple: *'Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.'* The reward for true and faithful discipleship is everlasting life in due time when God's Kingdom is established on the earth. Jesus had promised his disciples:

'...Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.'

*Matthew 19.28,29]*

Those who Christ referred to as *'the dead'* were those who had not responded to the call of the Gospel. They were dead, just as the Apostle Paul

wrote to the Ephesians:

‘And you he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...’ [Ephesians 2.1 NKJV]

For those who are alive to the truth of the Gospel, it is a time to dissociate from those who are dead to the truth. This is the reason why Christ spoke words that may seem at first sight to be harsh. He leaves us in no doubt about what he means in his reply to the third would-be disciple. This man not unreasonably, says that before he gets on with the work of being a disciple, he would like to say goodbye to his family:

‘And another also said, “Lord, I will follow you, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”’

[Luke 9.61,62 NKJV]

‘Let me first...’ These are **not** the words of one who is putting **Christ first!** Jesus has already made the point: we must put **him** before family and friends and once we are committed to **him**, there can be no turning back.

In conclusion, we see how Christ warned the Scribe of the price of true discipleship and gently reproved these two would-be disciples, who were minded to squander some of their Lord’s time in unprofitable activities. The lessons are as real for us today as they were some 2,000 years ago. The Apostle Paul, who once walked in trespasses and sins but was called to the Gospel and responded in faith wrote:

‘But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.’ [Philippians 3.7-11 NKJV]

We could have no finer example of following Christ!

David Evans  
Kent, England

# Bible Symbols

## Earthquakes

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SOMETHING MOST OF us take for granted is that the earth beneath our feet will stay where it is! For those who live on the geological fault-lines of our planet, life is not so secure. In only the last fifty years, more than half a million people have lost their lives in earthquakes. For those who have never been caught up in such a phenomenon, it's hard to comprehend the panic and terror as buildings buckle and collapse. The pictures we sometimes see in the newspapers of broken bridges, contorted railway lines and teetering buildings, hardly brings home the scale of devastation and human misery that accompany a massive quake.

### PREDICTING EARTHQUAKES – THE SEISMOLOGISTS

It's very much in the interests of all those who live in the world's danger zones, to know where and when the next 'big one' will strike. We know what causes earthquakes. The earth's crust is not a uniform skin like the peel of an orange, but a patchwork of areas called plates. There is a relatively narrow and unstable section of the earth's crust where some of these plates meet. The movements and stresses along these fault lines produce the world's major earthquakes.

A branch of Geology called Seismology, is concerned with the study of earthquakes. Probably the only seismologist you will have heard of is the American C F Richter, who devised the Richter Scale for measuring the intensity of earthquakes. Seismologists have mapped the earth's fault lines, and from their global network of seismological stations, they 'listen' to what is going on in the earth's crust. They try to predict when and where the next 'big one' will occur so that people living in the danger zones can be warned and have a chance of escape.

### PREDICTING EARTHQUAKES – JESUS

Jesus was not of course a seismologist, but he did make a prediction about earthquakes. He said: *'For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.'* [Mark 13.8] The Greek word translated 'earthquakes' here is **seismos**, which literally means a shaking and is where our word **seismology** comes from.



These words of Jesus are part of what is called the Mount Olivet prophecy. The background to this is that while in Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples visited the grand, recently built temple. His disciples were admiring the architecture when, to their surprise, Jesus told them that the building would be destroyed - and he made it sound soon! Afterwards, on the nearby Mount of Olives, some of the disciples pressed him to explain how and when this would happen. What followed was a prophecy of war and destruction centred on Jerusalem. Part of that prophecy was that there would be '*earthquakes in various places.*' [Mark 13.8 NIV]

### THE PROPHECY FULFILLED

Some of those disciples were still alive when almost forty years later, the Roman army destroyed both temple and city. The Jewish historian Josephus, wrote of the war and famine - and yes earthquakes that occurred at the time. So it all seems entirely literal. Jesus had described the actual events that were to befall the city. However there is a symbolic side to what he predicted. Jesus makes the all-important link between geological upheaval and times of national upheaval. As we said earlier, earthquakes happen where the huge plates that form the earth's crust rub against one another. In similar fashion, great national and international upheavals occur where the nations of this world rub against one another!

### THE PROPHECY YET TO BE FULFILLED

Although Jesus' prophecy came true for Israel in AD 70, the prediction was more far-reaching than that. Jesus expanded the prophecy to describe an even bigger event which would involve not only Rome and Israel but many nations. He said: '*...Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.*' [Matthew 24.7,8] This predicts a larger event than that of AD 70, though the troubles heaped upon Israel then are a forerunner of the troubles ahead when the 'bigger' prophecy is fulfilled. Jesus went on to describe events that will shake the entire world! He spoke of nothing less than the complete overthrow of the kingdoms of men and the establishment on earth of the kingdom of God. As earthquakes go, this one is right off the Richter Scale!

### ACTS OF GOD

We often hear earthquakes and other natural disasters described as 'Acts of God.' In part, that's a throwback to the dark days when our superstitious ancestors thought that an angry God was responsible for every calamity. But there is an element of truth about it, as the Psalmist shows: '*Then the earth shook and trembled: the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.*' [Psalm 18.7] This doesn't mean that every earthquake is a direct result of the wrath of God. Some of them are which is perfectly scriptural. The



*San Francisco earthquake, 1906*

[Hosea 11.1] It is fitting therefore that the mistreatment of His son on both occasions provokes the wrath of God – and brings earthquakes, both literal and symbolic, upon the world.

### EARTHQUAKES IN REVELATION

Most occurrences of the Greek word **sismos** are in the very last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. The book mentions earthquakes seven times. We know we are not intended to take these earthquakes literally, because Revelation is a book written in signs and symbols that need to be interpreted. Though, as we've seen already, the symbolic and the literal are

earthquakes in AD 70 certainly coincided with the wrath of God over the Jew's treatment of His son! On a grander scale, the earthquakes at the overthrow of the kingdoms of this world will coincide with the wrath of God over this world's treatment of the Jews themselves. God said through the prophet Ezekiel concerning those who will invade the land of Israel: *'my fury shall come up in my face.'* [Ezekiel 38.18] This isn't as strange and inconsistent as it looks. In fact it brings the two prophecies together in a perfect way. Although God often punished Israel for their waywardness, He never fully rejected them as His 'chosen people.' God even spoke of the nation as *'my son.'*

often combined when it comes to earthquakes. Therefore it should not surprise us to find a mixture of the two.

Revelation is a difficult book to get to grips with but it well repays the effort. The book seems anything but a revelation at first glance. However like many things, it's only a matter of familiarity. In this case it's a familiarity with the rest of the Bible that will give the clues to many of the symbols. We've already said that earthquakes are synonymous with war and upheaval among nations. Now add to that what you may have read in a previous article in this series about the symbolic meanings of **heaven** and **earth** in the Bible. (See Light Volume 17.4 – July/August 2001) That article demonstrated that the '**heaven**' and '**earth**' are terms used to refer respectively to the rulers and the common people of this world. When we read in another part of the Mount Olivet prophecy, that '*...the sun (shall) be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from **heaven**, and the powers of the **heavens** shall be shaken.*' [Matthew 24.29] we can't take it literally. Some of the real stars up there are larger than our entire solar system. They wouldn't merely fall down on us, they would annihilate everything here! This is symbolic, picture-language for the eclipse of power that will occur at the time Jesus is talking about.

If then, the **heavens**, sun, moon, stars etc. refer to the monarchies and governments of the world and the **earth** refers to the rest of us – the governed – then what does that tell us about earthquakes? They must clearly be symbolic of great upheavals among the governed, the general public, the common people, or whatever we like to call ourselves. If there is trouble in **heaven**, then there are likely to be repercussions on the **earth** and vice versa: if the world's leaders are in conflict, or experiencing Divine anger, then the peoples of the world will also have problems. The prophet Daniel spoke of the great future earthquake as '*a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.*' [Daniel 12.1] Clearly then, all levels of society are to be affected.

## BACK TO REVELATION – AND ARMAGEDDON!

Returning to the references to earthquakes in Revelation, one of them tells us that '*...there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*' [Revelation 16.18]

Let's forget the '*voices, and thunders, and lightnings*' for our present purpose (obviously this refers to disruption in the heavens!), and concentrate on the '*great earthquake*'. There is an immediate link here with Daniel's





*Kobe, Japan, 1995. This highway was designed to withstand earthquakes*

prophecy of ‘a time of trouble, such as never was.’ [Daniel 12.1] So we must be looking at the same event. There cannot really be two events of the same ferocity, both the worst since creation. If you look at some of the preceding verses in Revelation chapter 16, more of the picture comes to light. In verse 15 Jesus says: ‘Behold, I come as a thief.’ (see Revelation chapter 1.1 for confirmation that this is the voice of Jesus) This is something Jesus had said before to his disciples (see Matthew chapter 24.43), when telling them to keep awake to the certainty of his return to this world. Surprise, surprise! – it was another part of his Mount Olivet prophecy. In Revelation chapter 16 you will see that as a prelude to the great earthquake, the nations are ‘gathered...together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.’ [Revelation 16.16] Then the final phrase of the next verse is, ‘It is done.’ The stage is set, the players are all in place for the greatest earthquake of all time, for the greatest upheaval ever in the affairs of mankind.

### AND NOW THE LITERAL

History tells us that literal earthquakes accompanied the symbolic and this will certainly be the case in the coming ‘time of trouble.’ In the Old Testament, the prophet Zechariah talks about these same momentous events and he adds some startling information. Remember where Jesus gave his

prophecy of the earthquakes that were coming upon Jerusalem? – he was on the Mount of Olives. Now read what Zechariah says is going to happen when Jesus again sets foot on that same place:

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains... as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.’ [Zechariah 14.4,5]

There’s nothing symbolic about this – it will be as literal as the earthquake ‘*in the days of Uzziah*.’ People fled from that, so it was sufficiently real! The Mount of Olives is to be literally split in two and it will be divided by a great earthquake.

Moving back from prophecy to seismology once again, we would expect, based on what Zechariah predicted, that the Jerusalem area would be in one of the world’s danger zones - so it is. There is a large fault in the earth’s crust that runs under the Red Sea, between Egypt and Israel, and then continues through the centre of Israel along the Jordan Valley. Jerusalem is about eighteen miles west of a major fault line; the Mount of Olives is a little nearer. In seismic terms this isn’t far.

This future seismic event probably has much to do with the re-moulding of the land around Jerusalem to accommodate the new temple, the plans for which are outlined in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48. The temple is to be the focal point for worship for all the nations of the world [Isaiah 2.2-4] Jesus was not being negative or disparaging when he told his disciples of the destruction of the old temple as they sat upon the Mount of Olives. They enthused about how wonderful the architecture was. Jesus however was thinking ahead to a temple that would be far greater - not only because the design would be of God rather than Herod’s architects but because the presence of God would be there, adding glory to the whole structure.

#### YOU’RE IN A DANGER ZONE

No, Jesus wasn’t a seismologist by training, but he knew all about earthquakes. Like the seismologists of today, his chief interest lay in warning

people in the danger zones. As far as the symbolic great earthquake that is coming is concerned, the whole world is a danger zone. The earthquake may centre on Jerusalem, but the shock waves will travel world-wide. He wants people to know what's coming so they can be prepared and save themselves or, rather, so that **he** can save **them**. On the other side of the great Armageddon earthquake, there will be a time of peace and great happiness, when, as the book of Revelation says in one of its clearly un-symbolic verses:

'...The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.' [Revelation 11.15]

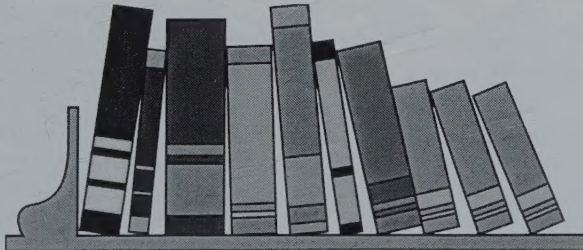
(Note this follows the great earthquake in verse 13)

**You're living in a danger zone wherever you are!**

You are in danger of missing out on the greatest time of blessing this world has ever known. Make it your business to know how to prepare now.

Colin Attridge  
Surrey, England

*Send for your FREE Bible Reading Plan!*



**To - The Correspondence Secretary**  
*See address inside back cover*





# Bible Cities

## JERICO

JERICO IS FOUND low down in the Jordan Valley, about 27km East of Jerusalem and 10km North West of the Dead Sea. The town lies some 250m below sea level, which makes it the lowest on earth. Although Jericho is surrounded by scorching hot desert, it is well watered by freshwater springs. The Hebrew name for Jericho means 'fragrant.' Today it is called the 'City of Palms'. It was also noted for its groves of balm.

To the north of the modern town can be seen the huge mound of the ancient city of Jericho called Tel es - Sultan. This mound contains the remnants of what is claimed by archaeologists to be the oldest city in the world. This was the Canaanite city that features in the Old Testament Scriptures. By the time of Jesus this was probably a deserted ruin, with a spread out town nearby that Herod the Great had laid out. It had aqueducts to irrigate the fields and to take water to the winter palace he had located there.

The biblical history of Jericho starts with Moses looking westward across the Jordan from Mount Nebo in Moab and seeing, '*... the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees.*' [Deuteronomy 34.3] It was Joshua who then led the Israelites into the 'promised land' and it was the city of Jericho that Joshua made plans to conquer first. The archaeologists tell us that the ancient city was surrounded by two walls; the inner wall being some four metres wide and the outer wall being two metres wide, estimated to have been about nine metres high. These walls were built with rooms within them and the faithful woman Rahab, is brought to our notice by the fact that she lived in a house on the wall. We read how she sheltered and helped the spies sent out by Joshua' hiding them and then lowering them from a window to escape. [Joshua chapter 2]

We then learn how the city was taken and destroyed in a most unusual way. The Israelites were told to march right round the city once each day for six days with the priests carrying the Ark of the Lord. On the seventh day they circled the city seven times and when the priests blew with the trumpets the people shouted

with a 'great shout' and the wall collapsed, Joshua taking the city and saving only Rahab, *'her father's household, and all that she had.'* [Joshua 6.1-25] Rahab appears in the genealogy of Christ and is noted in Hebrews chapter 11 as a woman of faith. [Hebrews 11.31] Some archaeologists agree this is exactly what happened, others say it didn't, but we need to have the faith of Rahab and believe the biblical record. (See article entitled 'Women of Faith' in the next issue).

The hand of God can be clearly seen in the taking of Jericho. Having destroyed it Joshua made a prophecy: *'Cursed before the LORD is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates.'* [Joshua 6.26.NIV] This prophecy was fulfilled some centuries later when King Ahab reigned and Hiel of Bethel set about rebuilding the city walls and lost his two sons exactly as Joshua had foretold. [1 Kings 16.34 NIV]

Before this happened in the time of the Judges, Jericho was taken by Eglon the king of Moab and with much of Israel, was subject to the Moabites for eighteen years, after which God raised up Ehud to release them from this oppression. [Judges 3.12-24] Later we find that Elijah and Elisha went to Jericho and an incident we can read about concerns Elisha, when he miraculously healed the waters. [2 Kings 2.18-22] One of the springs by the ancient mound is still called 'the spring of Elisha.'



*Jericho - 'The city of palms' with the Ancient mound in the background*

Jericho was inhabited after the Jewish captivity in Babylon, around 445 BC. Ezra records that 345 children of Jericho returned home. [Ezra 2.34] Nehemiah



tells us that their descendants helped to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. [*Nehemiah 3.2.*] In New Testament times the Gospel records state, that Jesus visited Jericho on more than one occasion and we get some idea of the size of the population of the city by the fact that Jesus was followed by a great number of people. Among them were blind beggars including Bartimaeus, who pleaded for Jesus to have mercy on them, which he did when they declared their faith and he miraculously gave them their sight. [*Matthew 20.29-34; Mark 10.46-52*]

The pleasant encounter that Jesus had with Zacchaeus at Jericho also gives us an insight into the prosperity of the city at that time. Zacchaeus was the chief publican, a tax collector, a man of wealth and hated by the people. As Jesus came through Jericho, he was determined to see him but because he was a short man, he climbed a tree to get a sight of Jesus. However it was Jesus who sought out Zacchaeus, seeing in this man a readiness to change his life and follow him. The record tells how Jesus, despite criticism, stayed in Jericho at this man's house, and brought salvation to his household as well. [*Luke 19.1-10*]

Christ's familiarity with Jericho and the road leading down to it through the Wadi Kelt, is reflected in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus' use of the example of a Priest and then a Levite ignoring the urgent needs of a badly wounded man on the Jerusalem to Jericho road, agrees with the facts. Jericho was like a holiday resort to those in Jerusalem. By travelling just a short distance, about four hours walking time, a person could be transferred from the sometimes quite cold climate of Jerusalem at 777m above sea level, to the balmy warmth of Jericho, 250m below sea level. This is why Herod built his summer palace there. The Priests and the Levites also used Jericho as their off-duty resting-place. The Jewish Talmud comments that there were as many priests in Jericho as there were in Jerusalem and Jesus used this fact to pointedly illustrate his parable. [*Luke 10.25-37*]

The last mention of Jericho in the Bible is in the letter to the Hebrews, where the writer tells us how the faith of the Israelites in the power of God brought the walls of ancient Jericho tumbling down. [*Hebrews 11.30*] It was not long after this letter was written, that the city was destroyed by the Romans to put down the Jewish revolt in AD 70. The marvel is that we can stand today on the ruins of this city, a witness historically and archaeologically to the truth of God's Word.

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